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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Secretary Rice to Israel, West Bank, November 3-5, 2007

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Key stories in the media:

All media continued to report on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to the region. Maariv quoted Rice as saying that

failure is not an option. Israel Radio reported that the Secretary stated the importance of the Palestinians' future. Leading media reported that Secretary Rice had agreed to most of Israel's conditions for the Annapolis summit. Ha'aretz quoted an official in Olmert's bureau as saying that the premier and the Secretary spoke about the upcoming summit and "adhering to the principles of the Roadmap as a basis for progress between Israel and the Palestinians." Maariv reported that the Secretary informed PM Olmert of her meeting with Syrian PM Walid Muallem. The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Secretary Rice as saying that the US and Israel are not opposed to Syria's participation in Annapolis, while Olmert conditioned such a development on the Golan issue not being discussed.

PM Olmert was quoted as saying on Sunday that contrary to declarations he had made earlier, negotiations with the Palestinians after the Annapolis meeting will focus on the core issues. "All fundamental questions, the substantive issues, all the historical questions burdening our debate, are on the agenda," Olmert was quoted as saying during an address at the Saban Forum, an annual gathering of Israeli and US political leaders. He was further quoted as saying that Israel has a "partner." The Jerusalem Post quoted Olmert as saying: "If we and the Palestinians act with determination, there is a chance that we can reach real accomplishments during the Bush presidency. There is no intention of dragging on the negotiations endlessly."

Maariv reported that in secret meetings Meretz-Yahad Chairman Yossi Beilin and associates of PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas, including Yasser Abed Rabbo, have been devising drafts for the declaration of principles that could help achieve progress at Annapolis.

Ha'aretz (lead story) and Yediot Aharonot reported that PM Ehud Olmert intends to release more Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of good will to the PA prior to the Annapolis meeting. Ha'aretz quoted sources in Olmert's bureau as saying that the PM is currently examining a request by the PA for freeing as many as 2,000 prisoners. Ha'aretz quoted a diplomatic source in Jerusalem as saying on Sunday that "because at Annapolis there will be no solutions presented to the core issues, the Palestinians want to show that they are making gains in routine matters -- both in the implementation of the road map and in the release of prisoners. From our point of view, the release of prisoners is the easiest price to pay, but there are still no numbers. Ha'aretz noted that unlike other moves that directly affect the quality of life of Palestinian civilians, a decision to free prisoners is less dependent on agreement by the Defense Minister and defense establishment.

Ha'aretz reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Rice on Sunday that the sanctions Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip will not lead to a humanitarian crisis. He also promised to allow Palestinian policemen to deploy to other cities in the West Bank, if the recent deployment of 300 PA policemen in Nablus has a positive effect. The media reported that Rice also met FM Tzipi Livni on Sunday, who told reporters afterward that the Palestinians "need to understand that the implementation of future understandings will be implemented only according to the phases of the road map -- meaning security for Israel first and then the establishment of a Palestinian state." Leading media quoted Chairman Mahmoud Abbas as saying in a speech in Ramallah that Palestinians had abided by 90 percent of the road map requirements and now "Israel must do its part." Livni was quoted as saying that Israel was prepared to move forward in discussions with the Palestinians, although the situation was "complicated ... more than ever." Ha'aretz reported that Rice told Livni that she hoped her visit would help to "advance the work you are doing bilaterally with the Palestinians as well as continuing to plan for the Annapolis meetings."

The Jerusalem Post reported that in an interview with the newspaper, the Quartet's Middle East envoy Tony Blair urged Israel on Sunday to make a "psychological shift" from indifference and skepticism about the prospects of progress with the Palestinians to an active determination to "make it happen on the right terms." He was quoted as saying that Israel, which turns 60 in May, would "absolutely" still be here in another 60 years, but that "to guarantee its long-term security I believe it needs a viable

Palestinian state." Blair was quoted as saying he was "sure that the Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert] is absolutely up for it. I've got no doubt about that at all. The next few weeks will tell whether everyone is prepared to get behind that."

Ha'aretz quoted Blair as saying on Sunday that he hoped to announce a series of projects that will help bolster the Palestinian economy. He told a conference in Jerusalem that formal negotiations over creating a Palestinian state should not be "impossibly difficult" but he acknowledged that the path was "utterly fraught" and that both sides had to take steps to build confidence. Maariv quoted Blair as saying that another peace meeting might take place in December, in which the Palestinians would present their plans for the future.

The media reported that on Sunday four Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip in two IDF attacks against Qassam rocket launchers. A Qassam rocket hit a high-voltage power line at the entrance of Sderot, cutting the power supply to the city for two hours. Ha'aretz quoted Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai, who visited the region, as saying that Israel might carry out a major ground offensive in Gaza "when the time is right." Ha'aretz reported that a private bill introduced by Knesset members Israel Hasson (Yisrael Beiteinu), Limor Livnat (Likud), and Matan Vilnai (Labor), and backed by 13 other legislators, calls for withholding Palestinian tax and customs revenue to pay for damage caused by Qassam rockets. Leading media quoted security officials as saying on Sunday that three Jerusalem Arabs have been charged with planning a series of terrorist attacks in the city, including the assassination of Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupoliansky, a suicide bombing, and a shooting attack near the Western Wall.

Leading media reported that the office of the Military Advocate General is expected to ask the High Court of Justice on Monday to halt the publication of the Winograd Commission's final report pending a ruling on the right of response for IDF officers who stand to be harmed by the report's contents.

Major media reported that for the first time, the Foreign Ministry will be given access to raw military intelligence relevant to political analyses. The Winograd Commission recommended the move in its interim report. Under the agreement, the Foreign Ministry will receive a great deal more raw intelligence collected through signals intelligence -- namely, communications surveillance -- in particular developments in Lebanon, Syria, and the PA.

All media reported that the circumcision ceremony of the son of Yitzhak Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir took place in Amir's prison on Sunday. Small groups of militants from the Left and the far Right demonstrated outside the prison. Major media reported that before a soccer game on Sunday fans of the (Likud-associated) Beitar Jerusalem club booed the name of Yitzhak Rabin when asked to respect a minute of silence in memory of Rabin. Leading media reported that pictures of President Shimon Peres with a kaffiyeh (Arab head-dress) were stuck on Jerusalem walls. Similar images portraying Rabin were posted before his assassination.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, who visited Israel last week, was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that interfaith dialogue is vital for fostering understanding and preempting further destabilization in the Middle East.

Secretary Rice to Israel, West Bank, November 3-5, 2007:

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Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Olmert is convinced that the Israelis will not forgive him if he does not exhaust this opportunity.... [However] some of them will not forgive him for the very attempt."

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent,

left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The Annapolis summit is an excellent opportunity to update the formula for peace posed by the Arab League and conclude that when the conflict is resolved, the Middle East will be free of nuclear weapons. No exceptions!"

Columnist Caleb Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Since Israel and the Palestinians are now already talking to each other on almost every level, Annapolis looks increasingly less like a shortcut in the Roadmap than a potentially risky detour."

Block Quotes:

I. "It's Starting"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/5): "In his speech to the Saban Forum on Sunday, Olmert made a significant step in marketing the Annapolis summit to the Israeli public.... Olmert proved a second time in a week (the first one was the press conference he convened to talk about his illness) that he knows how to create drama and control.... Should this depend on Olmert and Livni, the document to be presented at Annapolis will promise a debate on all core issues on the day after.... [But] Annapolis will be a photo-op. The level of representation of the Arab countries at the meeting will be low.... Olmert is convinced that the Israelis will not forgive him if he does not exhaust this opportunity. Arafat is dead. It also depends which Israelis we are talking about: Some of them will not forgive him for the very attempt. It seems that the temporary quiet -- some say: the coma -- in the political debate that is tearing Israel ended on Sunday. A different, stormy, dramatic, and also ugly period -- as we saw on Sunday [over the circumcision of Yigal Amir's son] -- has started."

II. No Exceptions"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/5): "What will Israel's policy -- or for that matter, America's -- be, if in Iran's upcoming elections, Ahmadinejad were to give way to a more moderate leader, who were to announce that Iran recognizes Israel's right to exist within the 1967, borders? Will Iran become one of the 'moderate' Muslim states, like, say, Pakistan, which is allowed to develop nuclear weapons?... What will the Israeli and American policies be toward the Syrian nuclear program if Assad were to announce his intentions to step away from Iran, not interfere in Lebanon and seal the border with Iraq? The struggle against the Iranian and Syrian nuclear programs, and in the future perhaps the Egyptian and Jordanian programs, is meant to divert attention from the real problem in the Middle East -- the war for hegemony over the region between the religious-extremist camp and the moderate-pragmatic one. The Annapolis summit is an excellent opportunity to update the formula for peace posed by the Arab League and conclude that when the conflict is resolved, the Middle East will be free of nuclear weapons. No exceptions!"

III. "The Long and Winding Roadmap"

Columnist Caleb Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/5): "Bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, Rice and George W. Bush are in no mood to patiently oversee the Roadmap process developing [as a self-contained peace process], as the clock ticks down on their time in the White House. Instead, they have called a conference in Annapolis whose timing and purpose appear outside of the Roadmap framework, even as the latter is now starting to move along down the original route first set in motion by Bush four years ago.... Since Israel and the Palestinians are now already talking to each other on almost every level, Annapolis looks increasingly less like a shortcut in the Roadmap than a potentially risky detour. So unless Rice can soon pull a rabbit out of her hat by bringing an Arab state such as Saudi Arabia into the conference -- a prospect that looks increasingly dim -- it is only fair to indeed ask, as Olmert did so defensively Sunday night: Why Annapolis, and why now?"

JONES